

July 23, 2004

Chairman Michael Powell
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20554

RE: WC Docket No. 03-133

Dear Chairman Powell:

Minority communities living in urban areas rely upon low-cost telephone services to accomplish many every day tasks, from looking for a job or affordable housing to staying in touch with family and friends. I am concerned that the FCC is considering new charges and fees upon pre-paid calling cards, which would raise prices for consumers nationwide.

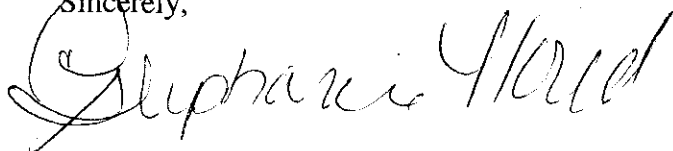
In particular, minority consumers living on fixed incomes or those without the means necessary to subscribe to local telephone service rely on prepaid calling cards to stay connected at set, affordable rates. Students, immigrants, senior citizens, military personnel, and others face similar challenges.

As a result, prepaid calling cards often are the only option available – without them, some consumers would, quite literally, be out of choices for staying connected. Raising the price of prepaid services will directly harm those that can least afford price increases.

Imposing new charges and fees would amount to a substantial increase in the per-minute cost of prepaid calls, destroying the utility of calling cards to many consumers in our community. Allowing the large, local telephone companies to collect such charges, even when they do not sell the calling card to a customer, would drive up prices and would make these services substantially less affordable.

Please look out for consumers by refusing to impose new access charges and fees on prepaid calling card services.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Stephanie Harrell". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

ccs: Commissioner Michael Copps
Commissioner Kathleen Abernathy
Commissioner Kevin Martin
Commissioner Jonathan Adelstein

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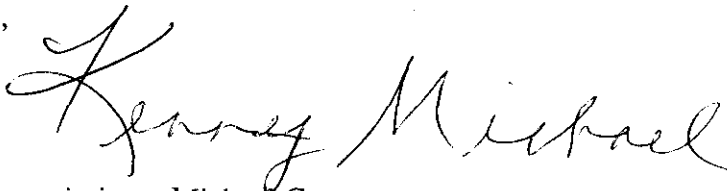
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Please look out for consumers by refusing to impose new access charges and fees on prepaid calling card services.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kenny Michael". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

ccs: Commissioner Michael Copps
Commissioner Kathleen Abernathy
Commissioner Kevin Martin
Commissioner Jonathan Adelstein

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I am writing to ask that the FCC not impose new hidden charges and fees on prepaid calling card services.

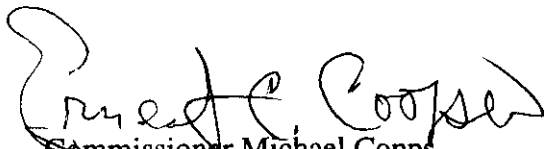
Minorities, lower-income families, senior citizens, immigrants, college students and military families rely upon calling card services for a variety of needs. Many of these consumers do not have the credit, bank accounts, or surplus cash to pay a large deposit for local telephone service. For these consumers, a prepaid card may be the only option they have to stay connected – to make phone calls to look for a job, for affordable housing, make a doctor's appointment, or stay in touch with family and friends. These cards offer convenience and predictable costs.

In economically disadvantaged areas, consumers literally risk being disconnected if the prices of these cards increase. Prepaid calling cards are indispensable for these and other consumer groups because they are an affordable alternative to regular and wireless telephone services.

But such price hikes are precisely what the FCC will do if it inflicts new "in-state" access charges and other fees on pre-paid cards. The fees would funnel directly to large local telephone companies while the burden would fall squarely upon those consumers that can least afford to bear it. Adding access charges and fees will substantially increase the cost of providing pre-paid cards at affordable prices, jeopardizing the savings provided by these cards.

Please stop any effort to raise the costs of pre-paid calling card consumers by deciding that these services are not subject to exorbitant new access charges and other fees.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Copps", written over the typed name.

ccs: Commissioner Michael Copps
Commissioner Kathleen Abernathy
Commissioner Kevin Martin
Commissioner Jonathan Adelstein

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The Bell companies want to target those calls in which a caller uses a pre-paid calling card and dials a toll-free number, along with his or her PIN. The caller, who may be in Virginia, for example, is connected to a “platform” in another state -- let’s say in Nebraska. From this “platform,” he or she hears a message about a company, non-profit or person. The caller then dials the telephone number of someone in Virginia. Current rules, as well as common sense, state that this represents two calls, one from Virginia to Nebraska and one from Nebraska to Virginia. Both calls are subject to interstate access charges because there is a call to Nebraska and then a separate call to Virginia.

But the Bell companies want to treat this as a single in-state call so they can levy exorbitant in-state access charges. Such fees have no relationship whatsoever to the Bell companies’ actual costs, which are only a fraction of what they want to charge consumers.

Prices are already rising for gas, milk and other products. Consumers don’t need higher prices for phone calls too, especially when these higher rates represent a blatant giveaway to four large corporations.

I am aware that the long distance companies and others that sell pre-paid calling cards have weighed in with the FCC in an effort to protect their customers’ interests in this manner. It is now time for the FCC to weigh in on the side of consumers and show the Bell companies the door on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "R. Marion". The signature is stylized with a large, looped initial "R" and a cursive "Marion".

ccs: Commissioner Kathleen Q. Abernathy
Commissioner Michael J. Copps
Commissioner Kevin J. Martin
Commissioner Jonathan S. Adelstein

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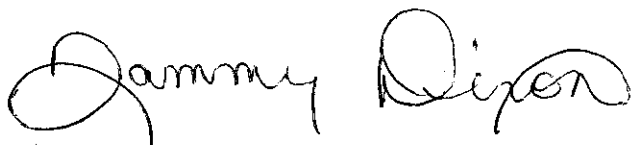
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Commissioner Michael J. Copps
Commissioner Kevin J. Martin
Commissioner Jonathan S. Adelstein

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Please look out for consumers by refusing to impose new access charges and fees on prepaid calling card services.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Carl Hunt, Jr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

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Commissioner Kathleen Abernathy
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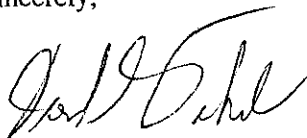
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But the Bell companies want to treat this as a single in-state call so they can levy exorbitant in-state access charges. Such fees have no relationship whatsoever to the Bell companies’ actual costs, which are only a fraction of what they want to charge consumers.

Prices are already rising for gas, milk and other products. Consumers don’t need higher prices for phone calls too, especially when these higher rates represent a blatant giveaway to four large corporations.

I am aware that the long distance companies and others that sell pre-paid calling cards have weighed in with the FCC in an effort to protect their customers’ interests in this manner. It is now time for the FCC to weigh in on the side of consumers and show the Bell companies the door on this issue.

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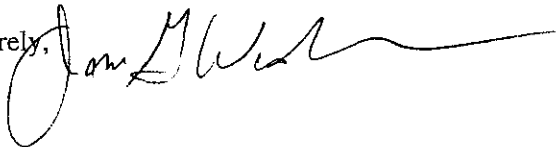
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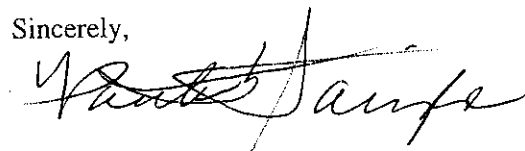
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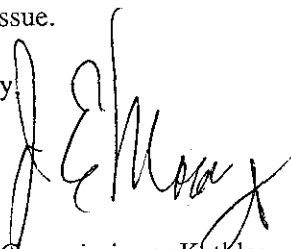
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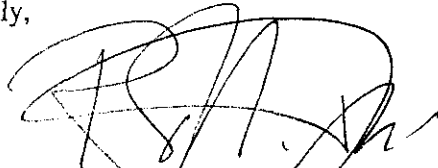
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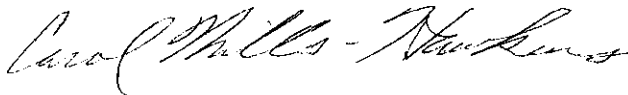
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July 22, 2004

Chairman Michael K. Powell
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20554

Re: WC Docket No. 03-133

Dear Chairman Powell:

I am writing to add my voice to the growing number of groups and individuals **opposed** to efforts by the local Bell telephone companies to circumvent current rules on calls placed with a pre-paid calling card. If they succeed, it will result in higher rates – in many cases, dramatically higher rates – for consumers who place the calls. As you approach your work on this docket, I implore you to keep the needs of consumers in mind rather than the pleadings of the four Bell companies.

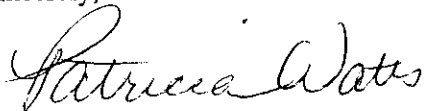
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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Patricia Waters".

ccs: Commissioner Kathleen Q. Abernathy
Commissioner Michael J. Copps
Commissioner Kevin J. Martin
Commissioner Jonathan S. Adelstein

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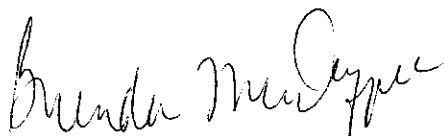
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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Adelstein", with a stylized flourish at the end.

ccs: Commissioner Kathleen O. Abernathy
Commissioner Michael J. Copps
Commissioner Kevin J. Martin
Commissioner Jonathan S. Adelstein

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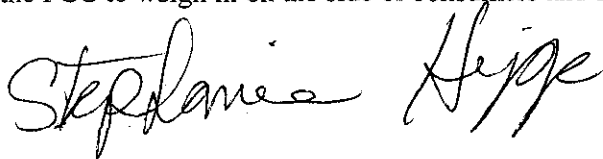
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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Stephanie Higgs".

ccs: Commissioner Kathleen Q. Abernathy
Commissioner Michael J. Copps
Commissioner Kevin J. Martin
Commissioner Jonathan S. Adelstein

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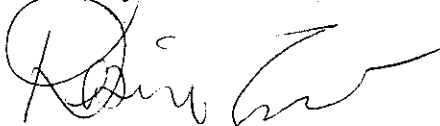
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A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "K. Abernathy", with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

ccs: Commissioner Kathleen Q. Abernathy
Commissioner Michael J. Copps
Commissioner Kevin J. Martin
Commissioner Jonathan S. Adelstein

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Renee Phipps".

ccs: Commissioner Kathleen Q. Abernathy
Commissioner Michael J. Copps
Commissioner Kevin J. Martin
Commissioner Jonathan S. Adelstein

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RE: WC Docket No. 03-133

Chairman Powell:

The FCC should **not** impose new access charges and fees upon prepaid calling cards. If you move to increase the cost of these cards, you will simply drive up the cost for minority or disadvantaged individuals to stay in touch in their communities.

The African-American community is particularly sensitive to any price increase for pre-paid calling cards; approximately 70% of African American households have used them. Indeed, half of U.S. households with income below \$20,000 have used prepaid cards. Pre-paid cards are so prevalent in part because they save consumers money.

With other goods like gas and milk rising these days, we should not now be faced with rising telephone costs as well. In particular, many low-income households who are on fixed incomes depend upon prepaid service because they cannot meet the credit rating or hefty deposit requirements that local phone companies insist upon before getting a phone. With prepaid cards, consumers can make calls from payphones or the telephones of family members and neighbors. They can use these cards to stay "connected" as they look for jobs, hunt for housing, or schedule many of the other daily appointments that we all have.

I simply find it unimaginable that the FCC would impose new charges and fees on these cards. Some of the nation's largest telephone companies would be the largest recipients of such charges. **The FCC should stand up for consumers and make sure that these charges will not apply to prepaid calling cards.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nina Meador", followed by a horizontal line.

ccs: Commissioner Michael Copps
Commissioner Kathleen Abernathy
Commissioner Kevin Martin
Commissioner Jonathan Adelstein

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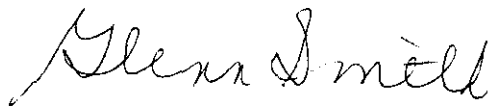
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A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Glenn Smell". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the distribution list.

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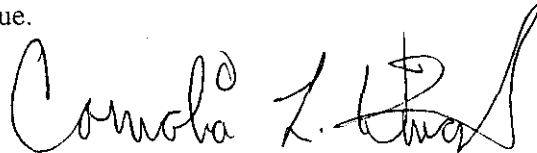
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